

1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative, how it promotes high student achievement and how it can be replicated. (Maximum of 50 lines for response)

Alumni Pride Boards are display panels created and submitted by former students who are continuing their education in areas related to my classroom or have pursued careers in those same areas. Alumni are invited to put together a personal collection of assignments that will hang on the walls of the design lab. These displays relate to engineering disciplines, architectural design, computer graphics, construction and industrial design (to name a few) and represent work that was completed in college, jobs they have done at their workplace, or a combination of the two. The panels include the name of the graduate, the year they graduated, the college major and secondary school they are attending, or the occupation represented and the company for whom they work. When I receive these panels for display, I am especially proud of the achievements of my former students.

#### Objectives:

1. Create a network of real people for high school students to contact regarding college curriculum and employment perspectives.
2. Provide a visual display of possible career choices for high school students to contemplate.
3. Provide juniors and seniors with insight to the colleges and types of programs available for the various career choices.
4. Provide visual proof that what students are learning in the classroom is relevant to future education or employment experiences.
5. Emphasize that their career goals are attainable and have been reached by other students who have passed through this classroom.
6. Create a feeling of self worth and pride to former graduates by encouraging them to display their work.
7. Create a sense of long-term commitment and appreciation to graduates by valuing their input and accomplishments.

*"A picture is worth a thousand words"* and throughout my teaching career I have come to realize the importance of displaying student work. It serves as a motivating force for students in the class, it establishes quality standards in my classroom and it serves as a means of reward and praise to students whose work is selected for display. It also provides parents and other visitors an immediate visual collage of the work being done by the students in my room. The concept of "Alumni Pride Boards" takes this proven educational technique to a new and entirely different level. Students who have graduated are providing guidance, inspiration and direction to all present and future students who enter my room. The tradition of pride and the accomplishments of students who have sat in this room are perpetuated and shared by all those who enter.

Obviously, the graduates are very selective in the work they put on display. This means that my current students are seeing some of the best work being done in colleges and businesses related to the design lab. The displays set the standard for what can be accomplished with effort and determination. The fact that the work was done by students who sat in the same seats in which the current students sit today makes it seem real and more attainable than the pictures they see in a brochure or newspaper. It also provides visual proof that what they are learning is valuable and relevant to the world of work.

Although the display boards lend themselves to areas that are visually oriented, the concept can easily be adapted and modified for any class. On a larger scale, a central display area such as the library or entranceway of the school might become the "Alumni Pride Board" showcase. Displays could be broken down into the fourteen career cluster areas with displays including photographs of graduates at their place of work, career path information and contact names and telephones.

If given the opportunity, the graduates will come up with some very impressive and creative ideas for their display boards.

2. Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses and how they were identified. List the *Core Curriculum Content and Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards\** addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses the standard(s). (Maximum of 50 lines for response)

The impact of “Alumni Display Boards” is beneficial to students at all grade levels and academic abilities. A wide range of careers with varied entry-level requirements should be displayed. Some may require a four-year college degree and possibly graduate credits; some may be accomplished with an associates degree from a community college; others may involve trade school, apprenticeship and/or on-the-job work experience. The point is to show graduates’ successes in the workforce across the spectrum. This is the ultimate challenge all schools must face and address.

This practice provides visual proof that all students can find a rewarding career path if they are willing to pursue their dreams and apply themselves. When students read about careers in the resource room or in college brochures, it seems unreal and impersonal. Pride boards make the careers seem more tangible and personal. The boards have been created by people who grew up in their community, who went to the same schools, and who had the same opportunities the students have today.

**Core Curriculum Content and Workplace Readiness Standards Encompassed by this Practice:**

**Standard 1: All students will develop career planning and workplace readiness skills.**

- 3     **Identify career interests, abilities, and skills.**  
Students in the classroom are exposed to many of the traits, skills, and talents required in fields related to graphic communication in general. The Alumni Pride Boards help to identify specific career paths that incorporate these characteristics and visually inform the students of the type of work in which they are involved. They also highlight the diversity of related fields from architect to laborer.
- 4     **Develop an individual career plan.**  
The information on each board provides a reference to the schooling or training the individual had to complete to enter the field. Most of the graduates who have displayed their boards have expressed their willingness to speak with students who are thinking of attending their college or who are interested in their chosen career.
- 5     **Identify skills that are transferable from one occupation to another.**  
The Alumni Pride Boards are a visual collage of skills that are transferable from one occupation to another. Students can easily see how the same skills are applied in such diverse applications.
- 6     **Select a career major and appropriate accompanying courses.**  
Once a student identifies an interest in the career major displayed on one of the boards, all the resources of the school become available in selecting appropriate courses in planning their career paths.
- 7     **Describe the importance of academic and occupational skills to achievement in the work world.**  
The students can visually see the connection between what they are learning in the classroom and what is being done in the world of work because it is hanging on their classroom wall. “*Seeing IS believing.*”

3. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met. (Maximum of 60 lines for response)

As a result of this practice, many students who have entered my classroom have discovered, researched, and pursued a career they might not have considered before they saw the Alumni Pride Boards. While Architecture, Industrial Design, Computer Animation, and Technology Education remain obscure career choices in many high schools, they have become popular career paths for my students. I personally write many letters of recommendations today for seniors who are entering career paths related to Graphic Communication.

Many students have contacted graduates for personal information about the colleges they attended. Graduates have been sincere in their willingness to help, they are open to questions, and they have responded with informed answers and frank opinions about the campus and curriculum. Many students have visited perspective colleges and they've met the graduates and been taken on campus tours. This type of interaction makes the graduates feel a sense of importance and worldliness, while the high school student feels a sense of belonging.

I don't have to advertise. Word has quickly spread to many former students who are interested in preparing their "pride boards". In addition, the boards have generated a tremendous amount of enthusiasm among the students who have graduated after this practice was started. Before they graduate, they vow to return with a display as soon as they complete enough work to merit one. A few students have updated their displays, making it even more valuable and interesting as a living record of their change and growth.

In addition to the projected benefits of the "pride boards", a number of unexpected bonuses have been forthcoming. Two students have volunteered to be guest speakers to discuss at length their career selection and preparation. Another student offered his services as a consultant for a group of students working on an architectural design competition. As a direct result of the interest and enthusiasm the pride boards have generated, our school is hosting its first "Alumni Career Day" in April of this school year.

As a teacher, I have gained a lot of information about current educational and professional trends from students who have returned with displays. Their boards have also inspired numerous ideas for design assignments that I adjust for the high school level of study. I have asked many of the returning graduates to evaluate and critique the current course content and offer their views on possible directions the curriculum should pursue.

Finally, our graduates have become strong public advocates for the program and tend to serve as ambassadors within the community. They feel they still have input, influence and a presence in the room even though they haven't been students here for many years. This practice has managed to tap an often overlooked, yet invaluable resource to our school – our former students!